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# THE TRAGEDY OF EDUCATION

BY

EDMOND HOLMES

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## FOREWORD

A SHORTENED version of this book was recently given as an address to a gathering of London teachers, and one or two other audiences. The first chapter of it appeared as an article in the January number of the "*Quest.*" And some of the ideas which are developed in it have been touched upon in my Introduction to the English edition of Mrs. Fisher's book, "A Montessori Mother." As the address, the article, and the Introduction have all excited a certain amount of interest, I have decided to offer the book to the public in the hope that it may help to focus attention on the great problems with which it deals.

The title of the book may need a few words of explanation.

We call that drama a tragedy in which

the leading actors, who are neither saints nor scoundrels, but, in the main (according to their lights), good, honest, upright, well-meaning men and women, so play their parts, in their blindness, ignorance, and self-will, as to bring great calamities on themselves and those who are near and dear to them,—calamities so great and so far-reaching that the immediate authors of them may be pardoned for ascribing them, in the last resort, to the agency of that mysterious power to which they give the name of Fate or Destiny, and of which they regard themselves as the almost irresponsible instruments. In this sense of the word, the drama of Education, as I read it, is a veritable tragedy. For, with the best intentions, the leading actors in it, the parents and teachers of each successive generation, so bear themselves towards their children and pupils as to entail never-ending calamities on the whole human race—not the sensational calamities which dramatists love to depict, but inward

calamities which are the deadlier for their very unobtrusiveness, for our being so familiar with them that we accept them at last as our appointed lot—such calamities as perverted ideals, debased standards, contracted horizons, externalised aims, self-centred activities, weakened will-power, lowered vitality, restricted and distorted growth, and (crowning and summarising the rest) a profound misconception of the meaning and value of life. And all the while the actors in this unhappy drama are the blind and almost helpless victims of a deadening tradition, which is not the less deadening because their own action helps to perpetuate it, and of a social pressure (generated, in part at least, by man's instinctive effort to evolve order out of chaos) which, if they dared to resist it, might well prove as tyrannous and inexorable as Fate.



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# THE TRAGEDY OF EDUCATION

## CHAPTER I

### THE POISON OF DOGMATISM

THAT great educator, Dr. Maria Montessori, in a book which has recently been translated into English, tells the following story : “ Once in our public park in Rome, the Pincian Gardens, I saw a baby of about a year and a half, a beautiful, smiling child, who was working away trying to fill a little pail by shovelling gravel into it. Beside him was a smartly-dressed nurse, evidently very fond of him, the sort of nurse who would consider that she gave the child the most affectionate and intelligent care. It was time to go home, and the nurse was patiently exhorting the baby to leave his work and let her put him

into the baby-carriage. Seeing that her exhortations made no impression on the little fellow's firmness, she herself filled the pail with gravel and set the pail and baby into the carriage, with the fixed conviction that she had given him what he wanted. I was struck by the loud cries of the child and by the expression of protest against violence and injustice which wrote itself on his little face. What an accumulation of wrongs weighed down that nascent intelligence! The little boy did not wish to have the pail full of gravel; he wanted to go through the motions necessary to fill it, thus satisfying a need of his vigorous organism . . . ; he wished to co-ordinate his voluntary actions; to exercise his muscles by lifting; to train his eye to estimate distances; to exercise his intelligence in the reasoning connected with his undertaking; to stimulate his will power by deciding his own actions. . . . His unconscious aim was his own self-development; not the external fact of a pail full of



little stones. The vivid attractions of the external world were only empty apparitions ; the need of his life was a reality. As a matter of fact, if he had filled his pail he would probably have emptied it out again in order to keep on filling it up until his inner self was satisfied. It was the feeling of working towards this satisfaction which, a few moments before, had made his face so rosy and smiling . . . and she who loved him, believing that his aim was to possess some pebbles, made him wretched."

This simple story is pregnant with meaning. The little tragedy which it describes is symbolical of the great tragedy of education, and may even be regarded as the first scene of its first act. In his dealings with the child the adult makes at the outset one fundamental mistake. Himself the victim of a misdirected education, which has given him a false outlook on life, he is apt to assume, in proportion as he is kindly and sympathetic, that the child shares that outlook ; that he,

too, is an externalist, a lover of outward things for their own sakes ; that he, too, wants playthings of various kinds, toys, gauds, prizes, possessions, distinctions, and the like. But, in very truth, the child, before he has been corrupted by education, wants none of these things. He wants to energise and to grow.

The adult in Madame Montessori's story was a favourable specimen of her kind. More often than not, the adult's misunderstanding of the child goes deeper than hers. More often than not, he abandons, in part at least, his initial assumption as to the child's outlook on life, and straightway falls into a graver error. For, having been convinced by experience that, after all, the child's outlook differs in many ways from his own, he assumes offhand that his outlook is entirely right, and the child's entirely wrong. He assumes, in other words, that the child ought to desire and aim at the ends which he—the adult—desires and aims at, and that

the child's failure to do this is proof of some defect in his nature (due no doubt to his immaturity) which education must correct. But all the while the child's outlook on life, before it has been perverted by education, is fundamentally right, while the adult's is fundamentally wrong.

Sometimes, indeed, though more rarely now than in former days, the adult's misunderstanding of the child goes deeper still, goes to the very roots of human nature. In such cases the child's inability to share the adult's outlook on life is regarded as proof of the innate corruption, the original sinfulness, of his fallen nature; and the task assigned to education is that of eradicating, or at least of starving, this corrupt nature, by bringing the life of the child under the control of a set of formulated commandments, which are to take the place of Nature's tendencies and laws. The kindly nurse of the Pincian Gardens thought in her innocence that her baby wanted to *possess* a pailful of

gravel ; and so she carried him off, in spite of his tears and protests,—baby, pail, gravel and all. Had she been sterner and less sympathetic she might have ascribed his reluctance to come with her to the inborn stubbornness of his rebellious soul, and the tears with which he requited her well-intentioned blunder, to the inborn ingratitude of his hardened heart.

Why does the adult misunderstand the child ? For the obvious reason that, on principle and with the best of intentions, he persistently imposes himself on the child, and so does his best to prevent the child's real nature from unfolding itself. When I say that he imposes himself on the child, I mean that he adopts towards him an attitude of dogmatic direction to which he expects the child to respond with an attitude of passive and mechanical obedience. In adopting this attitude of dogmatic direction the adult is true, not only to his own false philosophy of education, but also to the tradition of

thousands and tens of thousands of years,—a tradition which has affected education, but only as one of many aspects of human life. What that tradition is we are learning to-day in and through the very efforts that we are making to emancipate ourselves from its influence. The desolating waves of discontent and unrest which are sweeping over the whole civilised world and threatening to bury its civilisation under the primal mud of social chaos, are symptomatic, as it seems to me, of an immense and far-reaching change. An old order of things is passing slowly away, and a new order is still “powerless to be born.” The old order of things is the *régime* of dogmatism; the *régime* of dogmatic direction on the part of A., and of mechanical obedience on the part of B. This *régime* has had its work to do, and has done it—and will, no doubt, long continue to do it. It has kept order—of a kind, and has thus enabled social life to evolve itself—after a fashion. But a heavy price has been paid

for this service. For everywhere, and at all times, dogmatism tends to deaden life.

The dogmatist is one who says to another, or to others : " Such and such a thing seems good to me ; therefore it must seem good to you ; in other words, you must practise it. Such and such a thing seems true to me ; therefore it must seem true to you ; in other words, you must believe it. Such and such a thing seems beautiful to me ; therefore it must seem beautiful to you ; in other words, you must admire it. Such and such a thing seems desirable to me ; therefore it must seem desirable to you ; in other words, you must pursue it. Such and such a thing seems right to me ; therefore it must seem right to you ; in other words, you must do it." Stated more briefly, the dogmatic attitude amounts to this : " My part is to lay down the law and issue orders and directions. Your part is to obey these and carry them out."

Dogmatic pressure emanates sometimes from an individual, sometimes from a cor-

poration, sometimes from a community, sometimes from a class or social stratum, sometimes from a stream of tendency, sometimes from a mob. As a rule the few dogmatise and the many obey. But this is not always so. A society, such as a church, or a profession, or a trade union, may find it necessary to subject each of its members to strong dogmatic pressure. And there are times when the individual has to confront the dogmatism of an overwhelming majority of his fellow-men, as expressed in public opinion, or in established custom, or even in the fashion or convention of the day.

There are three things which dogmatism does, or tends to do, to him who yields to its pressure :

(1) By externalising his aims and interests, it tends to secularise, to despiritualise, and, at last, to devitalise his life.

(2) By forbidding his higher faculties<sup>1</sup> to

<sup>1</sup> Let me explain, for the benefit of Herbartian critics, that here and elsewhere I use the word

energise, and so arresting their growth, it tends to narrow his life, to vulgarise it, to centre it in his petty, undeveloped, unemancipated self.

(3) By substituting drill for self-discipline, it tends to demoralise his life.

These three tendencies are, in the last resort, not three but one. For they all arrest growth and depress vitality; and they all lower the plane and contract the sphere of life.

When I say that dogmatism externalises man's life, I mean that it draws him away from the main business of life, the business of living and growing, and makes him devote himself to matters of minor importance, to *faculty* as it is used by the plain, unsophisticated persons with whom I am in the habit of conversing, and by the unpedantic men of letters whose books I am in the habit of reading. They use the word, as far as I can gather, without any metaphysical or psychological *arrière-pensée*. And so do I. Such a word as *faculty* is the property, not of a clique of "experts," but of the whole English-speaking world.



doing (in the sense of producing outward and visible results), to seeming (in the sense of making an outward show and being valued accordingly), to acquiring, possessing, using, spending.

The reason why it produces this effect is not far to seek. Outward action is the only kind of action which the dogmatist can control and appraise. His business is, first, to give directions ; next, to see that they are carried out. To give directions is easy enough. To see that they are carried out is not so easy. By bringing pressure of various kinds to bear on his victim, the dogmatist may be able to secure the semblance of obedience to his directions. But he cannot go beyond this. He may be able to regulate and even control the outward action of those who are dependent on him ; but, though he may indirectly influence their inward activities, he can neither regulate nor control them. For example, he may direct the faithful to believe such and such a dogma ;

he may compel them to profess belief in it, and even to give ceremonial expression to their professed belief ; but he cannot compel them to believe it. If he is an officer—naval or military—of the martinet type, he may compel his subordinates to obey all his orders with due precision, but he cannot command their loyalty. Even while they are carrying out his directions, they may, for aught that he knows, have rebellion and hatred in their hearts. In other words, the dogmatist is doomed by the very conditions under which he works to look outward instead of inward, and to exact mechanical obedience to the letter of his commands instead of vital obedience to the spirit of them. And the more insistent is his demand for obedience, the more does he tend to devitalise the directions that he gives, and to externalise his victims' whole outlook on life. For, if he is to test the degree of obedience, he must see that " results "—things which can be accurately weighed and measured—are duly pro-

duced, and he must, therefore, so formulate his directions that measurable results can be produced in response to them. And to this vicious inter-action between dogmatic direction and literal obedience there are no limits. The greater the demand for literal obedience, the greater the need for dogmatic direction ; and the greater the need for dogmatic direction, the greater the need for accurate formulation, and, therefore, the greater the demand for literal obedience. In fine, the stronger and more thorough the pressure to which the victim of dogmatism is subjected, the more does he tend to look outside himself for success, for well-doing, for well-being, for prosperity, for happiness ; and the more formal and mechanical and the less vital does his conduct of life tend to become.

The externalisation of life tends to make worldlings of us all. The attractive force of " the world "—by which I mean the superficial side of our social life—grows steadily stronger in proportion as outward results

come to be valued for their own sakes, and, therefore, cease to symbolise those inward processes, apart from which they have neither meaning nor lasting worth. And the day comes at last when "the world" claims us as its willing subjects, and imprisons us, with our full consent, within the barriers of its false standards and false ideals.

This is one way in which dogmatic pressure tends to arrest growth. By forbidding man's higher faculties to energise, it takes a shorter, a more obvious, and a surer path to the same goal. Our faculties, one and all, grow by being exercised. To this rule there are no exceptions. We learn to walk by walking. We learn to talk by talking. Our digestive organs would become atrophied and enfeebled if we were habitually fed on semi-digested food. Whatever be our trade, or profession, or craft, or art, or game, or sport, we evolve the appropriate faculty, or set of faculties, by exercise, by practice, by constantly trying to do things by and for

ourselves. Thus we learn to row by rowing, to ride by riding, to draw by drawing, to model by modelling, to make chairs and tables by making them, to talk French by talking it, and so on. And the higher the faculties the more essential it is that we ourselves should exercise them if they are to make any growth. Our reasoning faculties would not grow if we were never allowed to puzzle things out for ourselves. Our speculative faculties would not grow if we were never allowed to think things out for ourselves. Our imagination would not grow if we were never allowed to picture things to ourselves. Our moral sense would not grow if we were forbidden by spiritual directors to solve our moral problems for ourselves. Our æsthetic sense would not grow if we allowed all our tastes and preferences to be dictated to us by art critics or other "experts." Our religious sense would not grow if our instinctive feeling for reality, our spontaneous "intuition of totality," were blighted before

it began to open by the chilling breath of formal system or despotic creed.

Now it is of the essence of dogmatism to encroach more and more on personal freedom, and, in doing so, to prevent our higher faculties—mental, moral, æsthetic, and spiritual—from being exercised. It is of the essence of dogmatism to tell us in the fullest detail, not merely what we are to do, in the narrower sense of the word, but also what we are to see, to feel, to think, to believe, to admire, to aim at. So far as it allows us to exercise our higher faculties, it makes that exercise almost wholly mechanical. In every case, and at every turn, it gives us isolated commands and minute directions, which save us the trouble of working out the problem, whatever it may be, for ourselves. But just so far as we exercise our higher faculties mechanically, we do not really exercise them at all. If we believe what we are told to believe, because we are told to believe it, we are not really believing. If we think what

we are told to think, we are not really thinking. If we conclude what we are told to conclude, we have not really reasoned. If we admire what we are told to admire, we have not really responded to the supposed appeal. Whenever one's higher faculties are being exercised, the source of the activity is in oneself. If it is not in oneself, if some other person's self is the real agent, then, however outwardly busy a man may be, he is not really exercising his higher faculties, he is energising as a machine, not as a "living soul."

With arrested growth comes egoism. This statement is true, whatever be the source of arrested growth. There is a healthy egoism which accompanies the earlier stages of healthy growth, and may, therefore, be said to provide for its own ultimate extinction. But the egoism which comes with arrested growth—especially when growth has been arrested by the atrophying of faculty—is an unhealthy, and may even become a malig-

nant, type. The true self evolves itself in and through the exercise of the higher faculties ; and, when these are forbidden to energise, the growth of the man is arrested, and the outgrowth of the true self comes to an end. The word “ arrested ” is, perhaps, too strong. “ In no respect to grow is to cease to live.” The growth of the man is not actually stopped ; but it is perverted, distorted, stunted, confined within the narrow limits which his individuality, as he calls it, prescribes. For the individual self is now given its fatal chance. The true self—the “ true manhood ” of Froebel’s noble philosophy—is the same for all men, in the sense in which true oakhood, the perfection of oak-nature, is the same for all acorns and saplings. But when the higher faculties cease to energise, and the higher nature ceases to grow out, the forces which make for growth, and which are still struggling to operate, come under the control of the individual self,—the provisional self (for such



it really is) which first distinguishes, and then tends to separate, each of us from all his fellows ; and this self, with its hard lines and ugly angles, begins to prescribe the limits within which such growth as is henceforth possible is to be made.

This is egoism, and it is the source of most of the evil and misery that disfigure human life. At all times it is a blight and a poison ; and, when it is allied, as it often is, with worldliness, its malignant influence is raised to a higher power. With its ways and works we are only too familiar. In the early days of his adult life the average man arrives, as he fondly imagines, at the maturity, not of his physique only, but also of all his mental, moral, and spiritual powers. This prematurely ripened, and therefore stunted and distorted, nature he regards as his real self ; and, in obedience to a natural instinct, he spends the rest of his days in trying to aggrandise it, to make it great. But, as the path of inward aggrandisement, the path of

growth (and outgrowth), is closed to him, he must needs take the outward path,—the path of competition, of ambition, of selfishness, of greed ; the path of dishonesty, of hypocrisy, of self-deception ; the path of envy, of jealousy, of hatred, of all uncharitableness. He must take this path in order that he may minister to the supposed desires of the individual self, in order that he may enrich it with “ results ” of various kinds, with wealth and all that wealth can buy, with pleasures, possessions, honours, distinctions, and the like ; in order that he may labour unceasingly for its material advancement, for its outward prosperity, for what “ the world,” or his own petty section of “ the world,” will applaud as its success.

Yet we all condemn the flagrantly selfish man ; and many of us bemoan our thralldom to self and sigh for deliverance. If we sigh to no purpose, the reason is that the solution of our problem—the greatest of all practical problems—is too obvious to be readily dis-

cerned. There is but one way of escape from self,—the way of growth, a way which leads at last to outgrowth, to the suppression of a lower type by the evolution of a higher. When this way of escape is barred by the deadening pressure of dogmatism, the doors of the prison-house close on us automatically ; and externalism finds its natural counterpart in egoism of mind and heart and soul.

No prison door is so strongly barred and bolted as that of the petty, ordinary, undeveloped, unemancipated self. “ The world ” may lose its attraction for us ; and we may take refuge from it in cloistered seclusion, or in the cult of “ Nature,” or in religious devotion, or in some form of “ good works.” But more often than not it is disappointed egoism which disgusts us with the world ; and it may well be that, even in the cloister, or the garden, or the church, or the slum, “ self ” is still with us—as petty, as insatiable, as tyrannous as it has ever been, and more insidious because of the

disguise which it now wears. The thralldom of the lower self, of which I am about to speak, is sometimes weakened by advancing years ; but we are never too old to be self-centred ; or rather, the older we grow, when “ self ” has once mastered us, the more self-centred we become.

The constant tendency of dogmatism is to arrest growth and devitalise life. I have dwelt on two aspects of this tendency. The third is of almost equal importance. The *raison d'être* of dogmatism is to keep order ; and the dogmatist and his victim—both of whom live in an atmosphere of delusion and make-believe—may be excused for confounding discipline, which is the only true and unfailing source of order, with drill. But, in point of fact, drill is the negation of discipline. For discipline, in the real sense of the word, is imposed by a man on himself, whereas drill, in proportion as it is systematic and successful, makes the man a machine, and so incapacitates him for imposing anything, except

the chains of habit, on his numbed and devitalised self. The discipline, if we must call it so, of forced obedience differs by the whole diameter of man's being from the discipline of self-control. The former may generate a habit or set of habits, and may do this so thoroughly that action at last becomes automatic and the man becomes a puppet, whose movements are controlled by wires which are worked by another man's words of command. When this point has been reached, the source of the man's activity has been transferred from his own will to the will of another, and he has lost the power of controlling himself. This is the discipline which is imposed on slaves and domestic animals, a discipline which is enforced by a system of external rewards and punishments, and the object of which, when applied to free agents, is to make a whole group of human beings—a school, an army, a body of employés, a church, or whatever it may be—dependent on the will of a master, be

that master an individual, a board, or a clique.

Discipline of this kind may not affect the whole or even the larger part of a man's life ; but so far as it does affect it, and so far as it is strong, thorough, and successful, to that extent it substitutes the will of another for the will of the man himself, and in doing so weakens his power of self-control. To this general conclusion there are two corollaries. The first is that the discipline of forced obedience acts injuriously on all or most of the higher faculties, and not on the will alone. For the will is but a vital aspect—one of many—of the man's higher self. The government of a country has many branches—deliberative, legislative, executive, judicial, and so forth. At their highest level these are not separate entities, but sides or aspects of an organic whole. It is the same with the government of a man—by himself. The man who wills to do a thing, must summon reason, thought, forethought, imagination, and

other vital faculties to his aid. If he is forbidden to use his will, he is to that extent forbidden to use those higher faculties, which, therefore, tend to share in the enfeeblement of his will and of his self. One sometimes meets with a stern parent or teacher who boasts of having broken a child's will. He might as well boast of having broken the child's heart, which indeed he has probably gone some way towards doing. He might almost as well boast of having broken the child's soul, or at least of having wounded it to the verge of death.

The second corollary is that, in weakening a man's power of self-control, the discipline of forced obedience tends to demoralise his life. If malignant egoism, especially when allied with worldliness, is the source of most of our evil and misery, the sensual passions are the source of nearly all that remains. I am using the word "sensual" in its widest sense. The sexual desires, the quasi-animal passion of anger, intemperance in eating and

drinking, the craving for intoxicants and drugs, are sensual passions, which, if not controlled, may easily wreck a man's life. For the control of the passions a strong will is needed, and for the strengthening of the will a long course of self-discipline is indispensable. The discipline of drill, the discipline which is imposed on a man from without, though it forms habits and may, in some cases, form good habits, tends, as we have seen, to incapacitate the man for self-discipline, and to that extent to make him a prey to the passions that are waiting to assail him. It happens, again and again, that a boy who has been over-strictly brought up plunges, when he becomes his own master, into a vortex of dissipation and folly. That he should do this is due, partly to curiosity, partly to the fact that the pressure which arrested the growth of his higher nature indirectly fostered the growth of the lower, partly to a not-unnatural reaction against the rigidity and narrowness of his early life. But



that, having plunged into the vortex, and realised that it is a quicksand of shame and horror, he should be unable to extricate himself from it, that he should—too often—be sucked down into its deadly depths, is due to the fact that the discipline of forced obedience, which dogmatism had imposed upon him, has fatally weakened his will.

The third of the prisons which dogmatism builds for the growing soul, is that of the lower or more animal self. The soul that is shut up in that prison may almost be said to have given up the business of growing. Within the limits of “the world’s” ideals there is room for much activity and much apparent progress. The tremendous despotism of the petty self is due, in part, to the fact that the impulse to grow, when thwarted by dogmatic pressure, directs its baffled energies into the channel of self-aggrandisement. But when the lower self has fully monopolised the rising sap of a man’s life, even ambition loses its hold on him, and he sinks contentedly, or

perhaps despairingly, into a slough of sensual mire. The spectacle of a man who is "unworldly," and in many ways kindly and unselfish, and who is yet unable to free himself from the tightening chains of a deadly habit, is by no means rare. And the conclusion to which it points is that no influence is so demoralising or so wasteful of natural goodness and capacity, as that of the dogmatic pressure which, in the supposed interest of a spurious "order," substitutes the discipline of drill for the discipline of self-control.

The evils on which I have dwelt are evils which dogmatism, *as such*, tends to produce whenever it encroaches, and just so far as it encroaches, on a man's higher life. To what extent does dogmatism, in the age to which we belong, encroach on the higher life of the adult man? Not, I think, to any very serious extent, if we limit our inquiry to the direct pressure which the man has had to endure since he arrived at what are called

“ years of discretion.” But if we look back to his childhood and ask ourselves what dogmatism did to him then, we shall have to give a widely different answer to our question.

I have said that the tumultuous unrest of the present age is symptomatic of a growing reaction against dogmatic pressure. This reaction has been long in progress ; but it is only in recent years that Man has become conscious, however dimly and doubtfully, that his arch-enemy is his own dogmatic self. Little by little, first in this direction, and then in that, he has emancipated himself, or is emancipating himself, from what was most galling, if not most hurtful, in the dogmatic pressure which had so long retarded the growth of his soul. The movement towards democracy, which has made so much headway in our time, is in its essence a struggle on the part of those who, being poor and dependent, fall easy victims to dogmatic pressure, to make good their demand for access to the

air and the sunshine, for freedom to breathe, to live, and to grow. And much of the pressure which Man still endures is the pressure of a dogmatism which he has voluntarily and with good cause imposed on himself, and which, for this and for other reasons, in no way encroaches on his higher life. When I take a ticket on an Atlantic liner I voluntarily submit myself to the dogmatic direction of the captain. When I take my seat in a train I voluntarily submit myself to the dogmatic direction of the railway company and the guard. When I become an employ   in a factory or a house of business I voluntarily submit myself to the dogmatic direction of my employer and his deputies. Dogmatism of this harmless and necessary kind confronts me wherever I go, and I cheerfully submit to its pressure. I also submit, though not in all cases quite so cheerfully, to the legislative and administrative pressure of what is called "the State." Some of the laws of the State and some of its

dealings with me I may perhaps regard as despotic and unjust ; but I submit to them, partly in the interest of public order and partly because it is open to me as a citizen to take action to have them changed. In the sphere of religion the official pressure which would once have sent me as a heretic to the stake, has ceased ; and though—apart from the dogmatic direction of creed or church, to which, if I am a believer, I voluntarily submit myself—there is still much informal pressure exercised by religious opinion, the force of this pressure is lessening from year to year, and in any case it is open to me to disregard it. The pressure exercised by ethical opinion is considerable ; and on the whole it is well that I should submit to it ; and I do so the more readily because ethical opinion admits of being modified—the past thirty years, for example, have seen considerable changes in it—and because it is open to me, in my small way, to try to modify it. The only pressure on me which is really serious is that

of the externalised and materialised society in which I live,—a pressure which controls or tends to control my ideals, my aims, and my standards, and which, being transmitted to me by the whole of my social environment, meets me, I might almost say, at every turn. Yet even this pressure, though intrinsically sinister and even fatal, will not necessarily do me much serious injury, for in the first place I can to some extent evade its influence, and in the second place I am (so to speak) “past praying for,” being an externalist, a materialist—an egoist, in a word—myself. And if I am asked why I am now past praying for, and to that extent past being harmed by the dogmatic pressure of false ideals and false standards, I can but answer that my education, in the widest sense of the word, that my upbringing during the earlier years of my life, arrested my spiritual growth.

Here we come to the root of the whole matter. The tragedy of human life—the fact

that in his very efforts to secure the externals of progress Man makes progress itself (in the true sense of the word) impossible—centres in, and is almost absorbed into, the yet darker tragedy of education. It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to compare one's own with other ages ; and the age in which we live, the age of the Congo and Putumayo atrocities, has such a very high opinion of its own humanity, as well as enlightenment, that it would be impatient of any attempt that might be made to compare it with any bygone age. But if we go back to the middle of the eighteenth century—to the year, let us say, when the rank and fashion of Paris flocked to see an unsuccessful assassin tortured to death—and then go back from this yesterday of our to-day, to the historic dawn of civilisation in Egypt, India, and China, we shall probably conclude that in the intervening ages little or no progress, other than material, was made. Morally, spiritually, and even (in the larger and deeper sense of the word) intellectually,

Man stood in the eighteenth century where he had stood I know not how many thousands of years before, his advance in some directions having been balanced by retrogression in others. Such sayings as "Man is the same in all ages," "You cannot change human nature," are the outcome of a wide and prolonged experience; and though the cynicism which underlies these sayings is unfathomably false, it must be admitted that the sayings themselves are superficially true. And the reason why the spiritual progress of the human race has lagged so far behind its material progress—the gap between the two being perhaps at this moment wider than it has ever been—is that in each successive age a fresh generation of externalists and egoists, overdrilled and therefore underdisciplined, is turned out upon the world,—turned out by the well-meaning dogmatists who control the bringing up of the young, and who are for ever stamping the impress of their own generation, with all its defects and limitations, on the



plastic<sup>1</sup> soul of its successor. It is in childhood and adolescence that dogmatism, for obvious reasons into which I need not now enter, exerts its strongest pressure, and does its deadliest work. And this systematic application of dogmatic pressure to the child and the adolescent, is what we call education.

<sup>1</sup> Nature makes the soul of the child *pliable* rather than *plastic*. Education, of the conventional type, by gradually depriving it of the elasticity which is the proof and product of healthy growth, makes it first *plastic*, and therefore over-responsive to the moulding pressure of dogmatic direction, and then *rigid*, and therefore over-retentive of whatever has been stamped upon it.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MALADY

IN this and the next chapter, the words *education* and *teacher* will often be met with. As a rule, when I use the word *education*, I am thinking of the whole bringing up of the child, from infancy to the very threshold of adult life ; and when I use the word *teacher*, I am thinking of all who are responsible for the bringing up of the child,—parents, guardians, nurses, governesses, schoolmasters, schoolmistresses, college tutors, and the rest. (If I happen to use either word in a narrower sense, the context will, I hope, make my meaning clear.) I am careful to say this, because it is possible that my criticism of what I have called dogmatic education might be construed into an indictment of the whole teaching profession. Nothing could be further

from my thought than to frame so unfair and futile an indictment. I have no quarrel with the teaching profession, which, as a whole, is scarcely more responsible for the follies and failures of education than the sister professions, which we call the Army and the Navy, are responsible for the horrors and miseries of war. I have a quarrel with the social system which has long held the teaching profession in its grip and made it the instrument of its iron will. And I have a deeper quarrel with the world-wide tendencies which have shaped and elaborated that system,—tendencies so large, so potent, and so deeply rooted, that, in criticising them, I may seem to be running a tilt against Destiny itself. Whether I am fighting with or against Destiny remains to be seen. Revolutions themselves come in the order of Destiny ; and the visionary who, in the name of the ideal, wages war against what is and has long been, may perhaps be working, under the prophetic control of Destiny, to clear the ground for what is to be.

What is the function of education ? What is it supposed to do for those who come under its influence ? We seldom ask ourselves this question. Yet it well deserves to be asked and answered.

I have elsewhere told the story of the Training College tutor, who led on his pupils by Socratic methods to the conclusion that the final end of education is to enable the well-educated pupil to become the possessor of a motor-car. The formula which he and they used as their "base," was their own answer to the question : Why do we educate ? " In order to help children to get on in the world," were the words which almost invariably rose to their lips when my friend propounded his searching question ; and from this starting-point it was easy for him to steer them to the ludicrous conclusion which he foresaw that they would reach.

What was there wrong with their answer ? Nothing, I think, except that it was too long by exactly three words. Had it ended with

the word "on," it would have been correct as far as it went. It was the addition of the clause "in the world," with its suggestion of outward aims, outward standards, outward results, which misled the students. The function of education is to help the child to "get on." But what does "getting on" mean? In what direction is the child to get on? What goal has his teacher set before him? What goal ought he to set before himself?

I doubt if a better answer will ever be given to this question than that which Plato gave, when he said that the "chief directorship of the education of boys and girls" was the most important of all the chief offices of state, "because, whatever the creature—be it plant or animal, tame or wild—if its earliest growth makes a good start, that is the most important stage towards the happy consummation of the excellence of which its nature is capable."

The function of education, as Plato inter-

prets it, is to help the child to get on in the direction of his own ultimate perfection, or, in other words, to help the "earliest growth" of the man to "make a good start." All the philosophy of education is in this sentence. Does the nature of man, like the nature of every other living thing, come under the master law of growth? Surely it does. To say that it does not, is to rend human nature asunder. For the human body unquestionably does come under the law of growth; and if the higher nature—soul, mind, spirit, call it what you will—does not, we are committed to the crudest, the most irrational, and the most unworkable dualism that thought has ever devised. The chief difficulty in the way of defending Plato's thesis is that one cannot conceive its being seriously questioned. One is reluctant to argue on behalf of what most persons, when the proposition was fairly placed before them, would regard as an obvious truism. The critics of education are much in evidence nowadays.

What do they say? One of them blames education for its failure to develop physique; another, for its failure to develop intelligence; a third, for its failure to develop interest; a fourth, for its failure to develop initiative; a fifth, for its failure to develop character; and so on. What these critics all agree in, is in blaming education for its failure to *develop capacity*,—in other words, to foster growth. They may not be able to realise the inner meaning or logical consequences of their implicit philosophy of education; but the fact that their grasp of it is in the main instinctive and sub-conscious, is a further proof of its intrinsic soundness.

There is, however, one point on which I must not be misunderstood. When I say growth, I mean growth, I mean the growth—for there is only one—which is the necessary counterpart of life, “so that in no respect to grow is to cease to live.” As life, in spite of its innumerable forms and its many types and grades, is one and indivisible, so there

is one law of growth for all living things. Within the limits of its own essential unity, the law of growth admits, I need hardly say, of endless variety. We may say, if we please, that there is one law of growth for the tiger, and another for the earthworm ; and we may also say, if we please, that in *that* sense of the word there is one law of growth for plants and animals and another for men. But to contend, as some educationists do, that there is one law of growth for plants and animals, and another—*fundamentally different*—for human beings, is to imply that there is one law of growth for the human body, in respect of which Man takes rank as an “ animal,” and another—*fundamentally different*—for the human soul. And the dualism of this hypothesis is scarcely less crude or impracticable, and is certainly less intelligible and less straightforward, than the dualism (on which I have already commented) of those who say frankly that human nature, other than physical, does not come under the law of growth. The



educationist who holds that the function of education is to foster growth, and yet contends that the teacher—as an instructor, a purveyor of information—“ builds up ” the soul of the child, instead of helping the child to build up his soul for himself, denies by implication what he starts by affirming ; for nowhere in the whole range of physical nature do we find an organism being built up from without, instead of from within. An outsider can indeed supply the building materials that are needed—or some of them—in the form of suitable food. Or rather, he can supply certain relatively crude materials, which the organism, by an occult chemistry of its own, will transmute into the more subtle building materials which it needs. But Nature forbids him to play the part of the mason or the bricklayer ; and he must therefore leave it to the organism itself to build up the fabric of its being, by working up its own building materials, when the process of transmutation is over, into flesh, and bones, and blood, or

their psychological equivalents. I shall, perhaps, be told that the analogies of physical nature are in no way applicable to human life ; but this argument carries with it the obligation to give up the use of words, such as *growth* and *nature*, which have been deliberately emptied of their normal meaning. The whole question is large and complex, and my chief object in raising it is to make my own position clear. I will, therefore, content myself with pointing out, in reply to those who reject *in toto* the analogy of physical growth, that the whole trend of modern thought, philosophical and scientific, is to bring Man more and more into line with the rest of living things ; and with expressing my own conviction, that if we are ever to rise to the level of our divine possibilities, we must first humble ourselves to the level of the plant and the animal, and so begin to realise our oneness with the one all-embracing Life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I ought perhaps to add, for the benefit of Herbartian critics, that I do not attach the slightest

If the life of Man does come under the law of growth, the master-law which dominates the whole world of animate Nature, the inference is irresistible that the function of education is to foster growth,—to help the growing child to advance towards the “happy consummation of the excellence of which his nature is capable.” With this conception as our foundation, the construction of a science of education becomes something more than an idle dream. Of all practical sciences, the largest, the most complex, and the most important is that which deals with the fostering of growth. It is difficult to find a name for it. The word “farming” is

importance to Herbart’s rejection of the plant-growth theory of education. Herbart was a pre-Darwinian, and his reasons for rejecting the theory are, therefore, all out of date. For, whatever else the *Origin of Species* may have done, it has unquestionably saturated our mental atmosphere with the idea of evolution, and in doing so has revolutionized biology and profoundly modified our attitude—popular, philosophical, and scientific—towards the sister concepts of *nature*, *life*, and *growth*.

scarcely wide enough, for “planting,” in all its branches, forestry, pisci-culture, horticul-ture, and other growth-fostering pursuits, seem to lie beyond the limits of its normal meaning. I do not know whether the New English Dictionary contains such a word as “growth-craft.” If it does, it is the word which we are in search of.

To this great practical science, by whatever name we are to call it, we must now affiliate the science (and art) of education. There is, as we shall presently see, one vital feature in respect of which education differs from all other branches of growth-craft ; but for the present we must be content to think of it as a branch of that greatest of all crafts ; and we must remind ourselves at the outset, that it is of all branches incomparably the most important, incomparably the most complex and difficult, and incomparably the most neglected and backward.

The function of education, then, is, in brief, to foster growth. Now, if growth is

to be fostered, two things must be liberally provided—nutritious food and opportunities for exercise. To provide these is the business of the teacher ; and when he has provided them (which, of course, he will never have fully done), and when he has given the child such guidance and stimulus as he may need, he will have done what was required of him, and he may then stand aside and let the child do the rest. For the business of growing must be done by the growing child, and if not done by him, must be left undone. On this point it is impossible to insist too strongly. The child himself must take in and assimilate the nourishment that is provided for him. The child himself must exercise his organs and faculties. The forces that make for the child's growth, come from within himself ; and it is for him, and him alone, to feed them, use them, evolve them.

But the teacher, whoever he or she may be—father or schoolmaster, mother or nurse, or governess—is seldom able to realise this

vital truth. The influence of the atmosphere in which he lives and works is too strong for him. Subjected as he himself is to dogmatic pressure of various kinds, it is but natural that his first instinct should be to apply the same pressure to the child. For the child, with his obvious ignorance and helplessness, and his naïve belief in the omnipotence and omniscience of his seniors, seems to be waiting for dogmatic direction. In reality, he is waiting for something quite different from this. He is waiting for guidance into the path of self-realisation. But even if he should rebel in his heart against the dogmatic pressure that is applied to him, he has no choice but to yield to it. It is hard for him to kick against the pricks. His state of entire dependence on his parents and other teachers makes open rebellion on his part impossible. It is so easy for his seniors to apply dogmatic pressure to him that they may be pardoned for thinking that it is right and reasonable for them to do nothing but

dogmatise, and for him to do nothing but obey.

But the naturalness, the inevitableness, one might almost say, of the introduction of the dogmatic spirit into education, does not make its influence on the growing child the less pernicious. Even if the dogmatic *régime* were applied to children with no more thoroughness than to adults it would do infinitely more harm to them, and the harm done would be more far-reaching in its consequences. The adult, who has himself been dogmatically educated, has had the mischief done to him in his childhood. The iron has entered into his soul. His nature is now so warped and hardened that the further application of dogmatic pressure to it will not do it much further harm, and may even be needed by it, just as crutches, which, if used habitually by a growing child, would end by laming him, are obviously needed by one who has been lamed. But the child, with his fresh, growing, sappy, pliable nature, has

everything to lose by dogmatic pressure. And that he will lose much by it, is made certain by the fact that the dogmatic *régime*, if applied to him at all, is sure to be applied with a systematic thoroughness from which no part of his life will wholly escape, and with an intensity of pressure which, unless he has abnormal vitality, he will be powerless to resist.

The salient features of Western education are as familiar to my readers as to me. But perhaps it is well that I should look at them from my present point of view. Based, as it is, on complete distrust of the child's nature, education, as we know it, makes it its business to encroach, persistently and systematically, on the freedom which is indispensable to healthy growth. Instead of waiting, "in reverent expectancy," (to use the apt words of a friend of mine) for the hidden life of the child to unfold itself, the teacher sets himself to interpret the child's nature, with all its needs and desires, with



all its powers and possibilities, through the medium of the adult's prematurely ripened personality. "True manhood," the ideal nature of man, is present in embryo in the normal new-born babe, as surely as natural perfection—the perfection of each type or kind—"lies intreasurèd" in the "seeds and weak beginnings" of all living things. Instead of helping the child to realise this ideal, the teacher—who may, for aught I know, be the most modest man alive—proceeds to put himself forward, as an average specimen of adult humanity, in its place. "I am your ideal," he says by implication to the child, "and you are to model yourself, or rather I will model you, on me. What I do, you are to learn to do. What I think, you are to learn to think. What I believe, you are to learn to believe. What I admire, you are to learn to admire. What I aim at, you are to learn to aim at. What I am, you are to learn to be."

With this wholesale substitution of the

actual for the ideal as his starting point, the path of the teacher is plain before him. As he is going to spend his days in directing and dictating, he must require the child to assume at the outset an attitude of "reverent expectancy" (of what he, the teacher, will say or do next) and passive obedience. Instead of the *rôle* of vigorous and many-sided activity which Nature has assigned to the child, as to the young of all animals, a *rôle* of passivity and immobility is assigned to him by his teacher. This damming back of the whole stream of the child's natural energies is the beginning and end of discipline and order. When it has been done to the teacher's satisfaction, the work of instruction, of education proper, can be begun. But as passivity and immobility are hateful to the healthy child, he must be alternately coerced and bribed into sitting still in body and mind. His teacher must approach him with rewards in one hand, and punishments in the other, and bid him choose between these. And this

system of rewards and punishments will dominate the whole of his education. His baser desires and baser fears will be systematically appealed to. Instead of learning to do things for the pleasure of doing them, for the pleasure of exercising his organs and faculties, for the pleasure of following the laws and realising the potencies of his nature, he is to learn to do things in order that he may enjoy a sugar-plum, or escape the lash of a whip. From first to last it is taken for granted that his education will be uncongenial to him, that his nature will revolt against it; and the inference to be drawn from this is that the lines which Nature seems to have marked out for his development are entirely wrong, that the true lines are known only to the teacher, and that the function of education is to correct the blunders of Nature and make the child as different as possible from what the mysterious forces which are unfolding themselves in him, and working in and through his life, seem to have intended him to be.

When order, or what passes for order, has been secured, education, in the technical sense of the word, begins. What form does it take? Instead of studying the child's nature, which, in virtue of its organic unity, is a hierarchy of organs and instincts and tendencies; instead of trying to determine the order of precedence, of natural superiority, which obtains among these; instead of helping them to realise themselves in that order of precedence, the higher to establish themselves as higher, and the lower to take their places contentedly as lower; instead of encouraging every expansive instinct, every emancipative tendency to affirm itself as fully as possible,—the teacher selects certain “subjects” as suitable for the child to study, finds places for these on an elaborate timetable, and proceeds to teach them in the way which his profound distrust of the child's nature suggests to him. Henceforth the teacher, not the child, is the leading actor in the drama of the child's upbringing. The

child is told in the fullest detail what he is to do and how he is to do it. He is told more than this. He is told what he is to see, what he is to feel, what he is to believe, what he is to conclude, what he is to think. Nothing is left to his initiative, and as little as possible to his independent action. He is to do nothing for himself which his teacher can do for him. His blindness, his helplessness, his all-round incapacity are postulated at every turn. Instead of being helped to win his way to knowledge, he is overburdened with highly-peptonised rations of "information." Instead of being helped to reason and think things out for himself, he is equipped with rules, with formulæ, with "tips" of various kinds, which will, it is hoped, make it unnecessary for him to reason and think. The directions given to him are so full and explicit that his response to them is largely, if not wholly, mechanical,—a response in which his higher faculties (which have his personality, his living self, behind them, and which there-

fore cannot energise, except in an atmosphere of freedom) take no part. Not his reasoning faculties only, but also the whole range of his perceptive faculties—his imagination, his sympathy, his feeling for beauty, his sense of rhythm, his quasi-scientific curiosity, his constructive instinct—are starved by being forbidden to exercise themselves, except within the narrowest possible limits, by being deprived of freedom and initiative, by being treated as parts of a machinery which can be controlled in all its details by its driver, instead of as the organs of a living soul.

Apart from the teacher's traditional distrust of the child, and apart from the general pressure on his own personality of the whole dogmatic *régime*, there is a special reason why he should be compelled, one might almost say, to think more of drill than of discipline, more of routine than of free activity, more of machinery than of life. "The world," which, alas! is as distrustful of the teacher as he is of the child, is urgent and insistent

in its demand for what it calls "results,"—for proofs, that is, of the teacher's industry and the child's progress, proofs which it—"the world"—with its false ideals and false standards, will be able to weigh and measure, and by which the teacher and the child shall stand or fall. Hence comes the examination system, which has long lain like an incubus on Western education, compelling the child, as well as the teacher, to care more for show than for reality, and involving the child, as well as the teacher, in an atmosphere of make-believe, of insincerity, of trickery, of subconscious fraud. Hence comes the narrowing of education in all its grades, and the progressive narrowing of it as the grade becomes higher, the work more advanced, and the test more searching,—for the teacher, who is to stand or fall by a test which "the world" imposes, has the right to insist that his work shall be tested on a definite and limited programme. Hence comes the subordination, in the teacher's mind, and in the

child's personality, of expansive instincts and ripening faculties to cut-and-dried "subjects,"—for who can measure, with the directness and accuracy which "the world" demands, the development of an instinct or a faculty, the actual vital progress of the growing child? Hence comes the superficiality of education, the keeping of things at the surface of the child's mind,—for if they are allowed to sink into the inner depths, they will escape from the teacher's control,—the substitution of cram for training, of the laying on of veneers for the fostering of growth from within. Hence comes the progressive aggravation of the teacher's instinctive tendency to do for the child what he ought to do for himself,—for if he is allowed to do much for himself, there is no saying what strange and unexpected results he may not produce when the time comes for his work to be formally tested. And hence comes—last but not least—the teacher's unavoidable neglect of the child's individuality,



—for the teacher will have to send his pupils, not singly, but in battalions, to the examination room, there to pass a test which will be imposed on all alike, by an examiner who is not personally acquainted with any of them.<sup>1</sup>

These evils are forced upon the teacher by his taskmaster, “the world.” And there is another evil forced upon him, which is perhaps graver than any of these. There is one point on which he has never deceived himself. In the use that he makes of rewards and punishments he expresses his latent conviction that he is working against the grain of the child’s nature. But the stimulus of rewards and punishments is not always sufficient ; and beyond a certain point in the (so-called) progress of the child, it necessarily

<sup>1</sup> It is scarcely necessary for me to add that nothing is so conducive to the employment of drill-sergeant methods by teachers as to place them in charge of unwieldily large classes and expect them to bring all the children in each class up to a certain minimum of “efficiency.”

fails to act. If the teacher would rouse his pupils to extra exertion, he must appeal to some other motive. He must pit them against one another. He must bid the child work hard in order that he may surpass his fellows. He must appeal to his competitive instinct. The competitive instinct is, I admit, a natural instinct: and the teacher who appeals to it, who makes his pupils rehearse beforehand that drama of "competitive selfishness," in which they will presently be expected to play their several parts, is wise in his generation. But he is not wise with the wisdom of the children of light. For the competitive instinct belongs to the child's lower nature; and if his higher nature were encouraged or even allowed to grow out and assert itself, the lower instinct would be suppressed—robbed of its venom, if not wholly eradicated—by the outgrowth of the higher instinct of sympathy and comradeship. This I have seen happen again and again. To invite the child to regard his

classmates as rivals instead of as comrades is to do him a great and far-reaching wrong. It is to dam back the pure current of unselfish sympathy at or near its source. It is to unseal the turbid fountain of vanity, of selfishness, of envy, of jealousy, of strife. It is to make the child an egoist, without his consent and almost against his will.

When the time comes for the child, a child no longer, to go out into the world, what will he be worth, and what part will he play? In other words, what manner of man is the product—the *average* product, let us say—of the conventional type of education likely to be? There are three things which his education will certainly have done to him, the three things which dogmatism is always tending to do to those who yield to its pressure. It will have made him, or begun to make him, an *externalist*,—because from his earliest days it will have compelled him to fix his mind on what is outward and visible; to think more of show than of reality; to

value himself as he is valued by those who judge according to the appearance of things, and cannot, if they would, judge righteous judgment ; to accept as final a test, or series of tests, which is in the nature of things inadequate, if not fraudulent and illusory ; to live, and move, and have his being in the opinion of others—opinion which has been moulded by false ideals and false standards—instead of in the inward processes of a healthily expanding life. In other words, it will have begun to familiarise him with the prison-walls of “the world.” It will have made him, or begun to make him, an *egoist*,—partly because it will have closed to him the one way of escape from self, the way of growth and outgrowth ; partly because the dogmatic pressure which has thwarted the growth of his higher faculties will have forced him into premature maturity, and so built up in him a stunted, hardened, and deformed personality which he will readily mistake for his true self ; partly because the

spirit of competitive selfishness will have been deliberately fostered in him by men who could not stimulate his energies in any other way. In other words, it will have begun to familiarise him with the prison-walls of his petty self. And it will have made him, or begun to make him, a *sensualist* (in the widest meaning of the word),—because, by thwarting the outgrowth of his higher instincts and interest, it will have allowed his lower desires and passions to draw to themselves too much of the rising sap of his life ; and also, because it will have incapacitated him for controlling those desires and passions, by imposing on him the discipline of drill instead of helping him to discipline himself. In other words, it will have begun to familiarise him with the prison-walls of his lower self.

In other directions its influence on him will have been equally disastrous. Its one-sidedness will have woefully narrowed his interest in life. There are whole sides of his

being which he will not have been allowed to cultivate ; and on those sides he will be out of touch with the world in which he lives. Its superficiality will be reflected in the shallowness of his interest in life. Even on the higher levels of his education he will have come to regard the subjects of his study as matters in which he is to satisfy an examiner, and which he is then to forget as speedily as possible. Lacking interest in life, he will fall an easy victim to *ennui*, and to the low and frivolous distractions to which the sufferer from *ennui* is apt to resort. The two great groups of perceptive faculties, which are covered by the words *imagination* and *intelligence*, will have been atrophied to the verge of helplessness by the education which deliberately cultivated the more receptive and more mechanical faculties at their expense, and which so restricted the sphere of their operations that their possessor was (probably) never allowed to discover the field which was most congenial to his idio-

synchasy, and in which, if in no other, they might have waked up to active work. And his initiative, the mainspring of all his higher activities, will have been fatally paralysed by the policy which deliberately repressed his every spontaneous movement in the interest, first of "order" and then of "results."

A poor creature this typical product of modern education will certainly be, at any rate as compared with what he had it in him to become; and a poor creature he will remain, unless, in the rough-and-tumble work of the world, some regenerative influence should be unexpectedly unloosed which will open a new vista to him, and so quicken into activity the nearly suspended and largely depleted current of his life. But no regenerative influence will ever give back to him the whole, or even the half, of what he lost in childhood and youth.

This chapter contains many sweeping statements which need to be liberally discounted

They are statements of tendency only, and do not pretend to be literally true. No one knows better than I do that the deadly tendencies of dogmatic pressure are liable to be counteracted, in part at least, by various opposing forces. In the school, as in the home, emancipative influences, emanating as a rule from personal sources, are or may be at work. And in the school, as in the home, it sometimes happens that these emancipative influences are strong enough to cancel the constrictive pressure of dogmatic education, and leave a balance over in favour of freedom and life. But this does not alter the fact that the *constant tendency* of dogmatic pressure is to paralyse activity, to lower vitality, to arrest or distort growth.



## CHAPTER III

### THE REMEDY

THE tragedy of education has now widened out into the tragedy of human life. If Man has made a mess of life, if he is a worldling, an egoist, and a sensualist, if he is stupid and foolish and ignorant, a reason for this seems to be forthcoming. For he has made, and is still making, a mess of his own upbringing ; and

“ The child is father to the man.”

But has Man made a mess of life ? Is he still making a mess of life ? That for thousands of years his progress, other than material, has been, on balance, inappreciable, the impartial student of history will find it difficult to deny. But at what average level has he moved through all the ups and downs of those years ? What does he himself think of his own ways and works ?

Those to whom we instinctively turn for an answer to this question can say but little to console us. The journalists, the novelists and dramatists, the historians, the prophets, the preachers, the poets, agree in painting human life in gloomy colours, agree in telling us that sin and sorrow are all around us, and that much of what we reap as sorrow we ourselves had sown as sin. There is some exaggeration—perhaps there is much exaggeration—in what these witnesses say. Sin and sorrow catch the eye of the onlooker, whereas goodness and happiness are well content to be ignored. The journalist is always on the look-out for what is sensational. So are certain novelists and dramatists; while others are cynics by temperament, and others again are obsessed by a physico-fatalistic philosophy which darkens their view of life. Great crimes, great calamities, bloody wars, civil strifes, dynastic struggles, political intrigues, arrest the attention of the historian. The prophet, who is always a rebel and a revolu-

tionary, must needs overdo his censure of the age in which he lives. The preacher is a pessimist by profession. Self-abasement on behalf of humanity is a part of his spiritual equipment. The poet is apt to dwell on the dark side of life because, as one of our sweetest singers has reminded us,

“ Our sweetest songs are those that tell of  
saddest thought.”

(Why this should be so I must not pause to inquire.)

Nevertheless, the united testimony of these typical witnesses is not to be ignored. When every allowance has been made for inevitable exaggeration it will be found that there is a solid residuum of truth in what they say. And our own experience bears them out. We have but to open our eyes and look around us in order to convince ourselves that sensuality, drunkenness, ill-temper, selfishness, vanity, greed, dishonesty, class jealousy and hatred, national jealousy and hatred, are

widespread and persistent evils which are responsible for much of the misery that afflicts mankind.

Why is this so? Has it always been so? Will it always be so? Does it admit of a remedy? Or is it rooted in the nature of things? We have been authoritatively taught to regard ourselves as miserable sinners, and to lay the blame of our shortcomings on Nature. We have been taught, in other words, that we were born bad. It would be strange if this were so. It would be strange if Man, alone among living things, were born bad, seeing that every other animal and every plant is born good, in the sense that it has in itself all the potencies of ultimate perfection—the perfection of its own type or kind. So universal is this rule that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, I must assume that it applies to Man. And whatever theology may say, no evidence to the contrary is forthcoming. To say that because grown-up men and women behave badly, therefore

Man is born bad, is as though one were to blame Nature for the impurity of a polluted river, forgetting that it had flowed pure, and would always flow pure, from its fountain-head. If we would know what we are by nature, we must get nearer to the fountain-head, we must study the child.

To do this, things being as they are, is very difficult. There are, I believe, many Child-study Societies in this country, but the work that they seek to promote is carried on under conditions which may almost be said to preclude its success. If child-study is to be effective, we must, for obvious reasons, give the child the maximum of freedom, instead of the minimum, as now. For there is little or nothing to be gained by studying the child's ways and work, so long as these are ours rather than his, so long as we control, or try to control, his actions, his motives, his feelings, his thoughts. To study the ways and work of a caged skylark would mislead, rather than instruct, the student of skylark

nature ; but it would mislead him less than child-study misleads the psychologist, when the child who is studied is the victim of dogmatic pressure and restraint.

Yet there are schools in which child-study is possible ; and, wherever it is possible, the evidence that it yields points to the conclusion that the current of human life runs pure, not turbid, as it descends, in each individual channel, from its fountain-head. An American lady who had spent many weeks in Rome studying intensively the Montessori system of education—a system in which freedom is given with both hands to children of the tenderest years—confessed, on the eve of her departure, that her experience in the Montessori schools had led her to abandon the traditional estimate of child-nature to which her “ orthodox ” bringing up had accustomed her. Having been taught to believe in the original sinfulness and the original stupidity of the child, she found to her surprise that, when he was allowed to develop himself

freely in happy surroundings, his nature, as it unfolded itself, proved to be neither stupid nor sinful, but (in her own words) “ intelligent and good.” I had made the same discovery in that school in “ Utopia,” which I have elsewhere tried to describe. There, as in the Montessori schools in Rome, the children, when relieved from dogmatic pressure, and allowed (with suitable and sympathetic guidance) to work out their own salvation, showed that they were *by Nature* “ children of grace,” —grace of body, grace of mind, grace of manner, grace of heart, grace of soul.

The inference to be drawn from the experiences of the American lady (and her fellow-visitors) in the Montessori schools<sup>1</sup> in Rome, and of myself (and my fellow-visitors) in “ Egeria’s ” school in “ Utopia,” is that the child is born good, in the widest and deepest sense of the word, and that his frequent failures to grow up good are due to his being

<sup>1</sup> The genuine Montessori schools. There are some shams.

subjected to some malign influence during the tenderer years of his life. That he is exposed to many malign influences goes without saying. But there is one influence which, owing to its strength, persistence, and ubiquity, affects him, for good or for evil, more than all others put together,—the pressure of dogmatic education ; and I have given my reasons for thinking that dogmatic education is, in the main, an evil influence in his life. He grows up a worldling. Why blame Nature for this, when dogmatic pressure, by externalising life, is ever tending to make worldlings of us all ? He grows up an egoist. Why blame Nature for this, when dogmatic pressure, by arresting growth, is ever tending to make egoists of us all ? He grows up a sensualist. Why blame Nature for this, when dogmatic pressure, by substituting drill for discipline, is ever tending to make sensualists of us all ?

What is happening now in all parts of the civilised world is that a type of adult person-



ality, which has been prematurely developed—and therefore stunted, distorted, and hardened—by dogmatic pressure, imposes itself dogmatically on the rising generation, the result being that this type, unlovely, unsymmetrical, inexpansive, externalised, materialised, self-centred, a paradoxical blend of natural goodness and unnatural badness—that this type, varying immensely from man to man, yet exhibiting its main characteristics (as the human face exhibits its typical features) in all but a few exceptional men—that this familiar type passes on unchanged (or with only slight modifications) from century to century, till we get to know it so well, that at last we speak of it, without misgiving, as “human nature.” And all the while we have not the least notion what human nature—the ideal type, the *ἰδέα* of our race—really is. So far, indeed, are we from knowing this, that when the *ἰδέα* does appear on earth, as in the person of the Christ, and flash on us for a moment, and command the homage of

our hearts, we are unable to recognise it as genuinely human, and insist that it is supernaturally divine.

Yet there is a potential Christ in every newborn babe. The central doctrine of Christianity means this or it means nothing. Christhood, "true manhood," the ideal perfection of human nature, is Divinity itself. This is the final answer to those who account for Man's shortcomings by teaching us that we are all born bad. Whatever is born carries with it in embryo the perfection of its own generic nature. And the perfection of human nature—perfect in its mastery of itself, perfect in its emancipation from self—is, in a word, divine. Therefore, instead of being born bad, man is at birth—

"a god, though in the germ."

If this were not so, how could Man know that he was bad? From what high standpoint does he look down, with shame and sorrow, on his own doings? By reference to what high standard does he condemn him-

self for having sinned and done amiss ? The standpoint and the standard are his very own. It is the *ιδέα* of his type, it is his own real nature, which reveals to him his imperfection and convicts him of failure. “ Il est misérable puisqu’il l’est ; mais il est bien grand puisqu’il le connaît.”

If education has so far made Man miss his divine destiny, it must now help him to achieve it. If it has so far hindered his growth, it must now try to foster it. Man is great because he knows himself to be miserable. Why should he not outgrow his “ misery ” by realising his potential “ greatness ” ? For he must *outgrow* his misery, if he is to escape from it. No other way of deliverance is open to him. His nature, if allowed to grow to the full stature of its potential “ greatness,” will spontaneously close the main sources of his “ misery ” by placing the egoism of his ordinary self and the desires and impulses of his lower self under due control.

But if the nature of Man is to be allowed to evolve itself, the child must be given freedom. The business of growing, as I have already said, must be done by the growing child, and cannot be done for him by his parent or teacher. This means that he must, as far as possible, be relieved from dogmatic pressure. Can this be done? Is the idea of educating the child in an atmosphere of freedom an idle dream? I happen to know that it is no dream. But my experiences have been exceptional, and some of those who have not shared them will doubtless regard them as inconclusive, and will decide on *a priori* grounds against the possibility of giving freedom to children of any age. Even so enlightened and open-minded an educationist as Professor Adams, must needs dismiss the Tolstoyan experiments in "free education" with a sneer. The Tolstoyan schools were forcibly closed by the police; but while the experiment lasted it proved that there are immense stores of

latent vitality and great reserves of undeveloped capacity even in peasant children, and that freedom tends to vitalise the child's powers, as surely as dogmatism tends to depress them. For this reason, and because Tolstoi's bold assertion that "education as a deliberate moulding of people into set forms is sterile, illegitimate and impossible," is an open challenge to the whole civilised world, his experiment deserves a more sympathetic study than Professor Adams has given it. If the discipline of the Tolstoyan schools was defective, at any rate as judged by Russian standards, it is surely worth our while to ask why the schools failed in this respect. There is an obvious answer to this question. Tolstoi, with his large-hearted faith in human nature, gave complete freedom to children who had been subjected to dogmatic pressure for some eight or ten years, and had thereby been rendered incapable, largely, if not wholly, of self-control. If you lame a child you must provide him with crutches ; and, having pro-

vided him with crutches, you must not suddenly take these from him and expect him to walk. If you keep a child in the dark for eight or ten years you must not suddenly take him out into the light and expect him to see. Experience has proved that freedom can safely be given to very young children, provided that there is plenty of suitable work for them to do ; and it has also proved that, with the same proviso, freedom can safely be given to older children by a tactful and sympathetic teacher, who introduces it gradually and cautiously into his school. But to give freedom suddenly and in full measure to children who have been kept for years under strict control, is to court disaster. From the point of view of discipline, Tolstoi's experiment was almost predestined to fail ; and its failure (if it did fail) in no way discredits the great principle of freedom in whose interest it was conceived and carried out.

The upholders of the *régime* of dogmatic direction are apt to assume that, if freedom

is given to the child, there will be nothing for the teacher to do but stand aside and let Nature take its course. Professor Adams, for example, takes for granted that in the Froebelian system, “the teacher is but a benevolent superintendent of the process of development which he allows to take its course.” I have never heard of any advocate for freedom, with the exception of Rousseau, who assigned to the teacher a *rôle* of complete passivity. And I have yet to meet the Froebelian teacher who is content to be a mere superintendent of the process of development, or of any other process. As far as my experience goes, the Froebelians, like their master, do too much, rather than too little, for their pupils. They seem to think, as he seems to have thought, that the function of education is *dogmatically* to foster growth. This no man can do : but the true fosterer of growth—be he gardener, planter, stock-raiser, or teacher—has as little in common with the mere looker-on at the “process of develop-

ment " as with the dogmatic director of it ; and the teacher who tries to give freedom and aid development will find, as we shall presently see, that his *rôle* is by no means negative and passive, that on the contrary there is much work for him to do, work which is more difficult, more exacting, and of a higher order than the work which is done by teachers in schools of the conventional type. Indeed, the chief practical objection to the *régime* of freedom is that it makes demands on the teacher which, unless he happens to be exceptionally gifted, or to have had an exceptional training, he cannot be expected to meet.

The experiment of giving freedom to children has been tried by others than Tolstoi, and, where tried under favourable conditions, has proved a splendid success. One such experiment, which has unhappily come to an end, I have elsewhere tried to describe. The teacher who made that experiment, and who had to deal for the most part with what the



Board of Education call "older children," introduced freedom slowly, cautiously, and tactfully into her school; but she found that the more freedom she gave her pupils, the worthier did they prove themselves of the boon that she dispensed; for, as time went on, her school became more and more autonomous, the burden of directing their own education, both as a whole and in its details, being gradually transferred to the children, who welcomed each fresh responsibility as a further proof of their teacher's confidence and goodwill, and requited with ever-increasing loyalty and love the fresh demands that she made on their capacity and their self-control. The experiments of Dr. Maria Montessori in Rome, which are now arresting the attention of the whole educational world, have proved that freedom can safely be given, in fullest measure, to children of the very tenderest years; and that where freedom is given under judicious and sympathetic guidance to young children, the consequent develop-

ment of their nature carries with it, in due season, the outgrowth of all those qualities which distinguished the older children of "Utopia"—patience, perseverance, resourcefulness, self-reliance, self-control, self-forgetfulness, sweetness of temper, good fellowship, charm of manner, joy of heart—all interpenetrated by loving devotion to the teacher, whose self-effacement is rewarded by an ascendancy over her pupils, which the dogmatic teacher can never hope to acquire. And the still more daring experiments of Mr. George and Mr. Lane, of "Junior Republic" fame, in America, have proved that freedom can safely be given to children and adolescents even of the "wastrel" and "criminal" types; and that where given, by those who know how to give it, its power to redeem the fallen, to restrain the lawless, to vitalise the listless, is so great as to seem miraculous to those whose experiences of the treatment of youthful criminality have been limited to reformatories of the repressive type.

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In any case, the experiment of giving freedom to the child *must* be made if education is not to remain eternally sterile. For in no other way can growth be stimulated and development aided. The child himself must digest the food that is provided for him. The child himself must exercise his limbs, and organs, and powers, and faculties. The attempt of the dogmatist to do these things for him, on any plane of his being, must needs end in failure ; and one thing only could be more disastrous than its failure, its inconceivable success.

And this is not the only reason why the child should be set free. I have said that education is a branch of the great science (and art) of "growth-craft." There is, however, one vital difference between education and all other branches of the science. The farmer, the forester, the planter, the stock-raiser, are all engaged in guiding the current of life into channels which have been defined for them by their own conceptions of utility.

When the forester, for example, plants beech-trees so close together that they can make no lateral growth, his aim is to produce, not perfect specimens of beechwood, but the maximum amount of timber per acre. The teacher, on the other hand, is, or ought to be, a pure idealist. His function is to guide the current of life into the channel or system of channels which leads towards "true manhood." But if he is to do this, he must have some knowledge of what "true manhood" is; he must know which tendencies are central in human nature and which derivative, which are dominant and which subordinate, which are permanent and which provisional, which are high and to be encouraged, and which are low and to be controlled. If he is to acquire this necessary knowledge, he must study the child's opening nature under conditions which are favourable to its healthy and harmonious development. The system of education which is not based on child-study is a house built on the sands.

But child-study is, as we have seen, impracticable so long as education remains dogmatic, so long as the sayings and doings of the child are his teacher's rather than his own. It follows that if the teacher is to give effective guidance to the child he must first set him free. "The conception of freedom which must inspire pedagogy," says Dr. Montessori, "is that which the biological scientists of the nineteenth century have shown us in their methods of studying life. The old-time pedagogy was incompetent and vague, because it did not understand the principle of studying the pupil before educating him, and of leaving him free for spontaneous manifestations." The plain truth is that the child, and the child alone, can point out to the teacher the goal which the teacher is to help him to reach.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Homer Lane, of the Ford Junior Republic, which receives "*incorrigible*" boys only, between the ages of 10 and 16, had been a teacher for many years before he began to interest himself in juvenile delinquency, and had previously gone through

There is one more reason why the child should be uncaged,—a reason which, if not so weighty as the others, is perhaps more insistent and less patient of delay. I have already spoken of the reaction against dogmatic pressure which has long been in progress, and the cumulative effects of which we are now beginning to witness. When did this reaction begin? We cannot say. The search for its origin would take us back to the beginnings of history. For there are few chapters in the history of mankind in which the struggle for freedom does not claim one or more pages. “The struggle for freedom.” What do these words mean? The word “freedom” has a magic and an inspiration

University courses in psychology and pedagogy. His experiences in a “community of free children” convinced him that the knowledge of child-nature which he had acquired in the University lecture-rooms and in the schools where he had taught, was of little or no value, and that his psychology was so defective that there was nothing to be done to it but to rebuild it from its very foundations.

of its own. Poets have glorified freedom. Heroes have fought and died for it. Yet for most men, including even the poets and the heroes, the struggle for freedom has meant nothing more than the attempt to throw off the yoke of a despot, or a conquering people. But the real meaning of the words lies deeper than this. The struggle for freedom is in its essence a struggle against the deadening pressure of dogmatism, a struggle for the right to live one's own life, to grow along the lines of one's own being. Yet the struggle, as history describes it, has in the main been a blind and chaotic "battle in the mist," in the course of which men have again and again exchanged one tyranny for another, the liberator having often become a harsh oppressor, while the liberated people have often denied freedom to those who came under their rule. Why has this been so? Why has dogmatism controlled and perverted the very efforts that Man has made to free himself from its yoke? May it not be because Man has

forgotten to call to his aid the one ally who could have turned defeat into victory, and victory into lasting victory—an ally who is strong in his very weakness—the helpless child? Clamorous in his demands for freedom for himself, he has never thought of giving freedom to the child; and the result of this has been that generation after generation has grown up, and still grows up, hardened, narrowed, and materialised by dogmatic pressure, dominated by false ideals, incapable of self-discipline, unworthy of freedom, and unfit to enjoy it.

In our own age, the struggle against dogmatism is being waged with a thoroughness and a whole-heartedness for which history has no precedent. In every department of human life—religion, morals, manners, domestic and social habits, art, letters, poetry, music—tradition and authority are systematically set at nought. The mere fact that a belief, opinion, rule, or custom, is of old standing, suffices to discredit it. There



is nothing that our iconoclasts regard as sacred. Even the deep-laid foundations of home life are being undermined by their rebellious criticism. Such a struggle, waged on a large scale, by a generation of egoists and sensualists, threatens disaster to the whole fabric of our social life. The one merit of dogmatism has been its maintenance of order ; and when the reaction against it is carried so far—owing to the materialism, individualism, and indiscipline of the rebels—that the banner of freedom has to give place to the black flag of license, the danger is pressing that for the deadly despotism of dogmatic direction will be substituted the still deadlier despotism of anarchy and chaos. If this catastrophe is to be avoided, we must rear a generation of men who will prove themselves worthy of freedom ; in other words, we must transfer the struggle against dogmatism to the arena of the nursery and the school.

This is what pioneers, like the “ Egeria ”

of my " Utopian " school, Dr. Maria Montessori of Rome, and Mr. George and Mr. Lane, of " Junior Republic " fame, are doing; and the striking results which they have achieved might well encourage other teachers to join their slender band. But they are " results " of another order than those which " the world " demands and applauds. In the Junior Republics it is found that self-government often transforms the worst delinquents into the best citizens. This experience is profoundly significant. The vigorous life which enables the youthful delinquent to resist the deadening pressure of a dogmatic education, finding that all legitimate channels are closed against it, forces an outlet for itself into the channel of lawlessness and crime. In the *régime* of freedom, the same life returns spontaneously, with unabated energy, to the channel of law and order and welldoing. To a less vigorous nature, freedom might have come too late. But the young criminal, in and through his

very criminality, has kept open his communication with the springs of his life. Could stronger proof be given of the waste of energy and capacity which goes on under the existing *régime* ? Dogmatism too often turns the best into the worst. Freedom can reconvert the worst into the best. It is between these alternatives that the teacher must make his choice.

Which path will he take ? Will he continue to impose on the young that travesty of “ true manhood ” which we mis-call human nature ? Or will he help “ true manhood ”—the reality of human nature—to evolve itself in the young ? An almost irresistible pressure will be put upon him to take the former path. And should he choose the latter, the way of effacement for himself, and emancipation and growth for the child, he will find that he has set himself a task of almost insuperable difficulty.

Almost insuperable, but not quite. At the outset he will find that he is again and again

involved in a “vicious circle,” not of thought, but of practice. Here is one such circle: “The egoism of the adult makes him a dogmatist; and his dogmatic treatment of the child makes the latter an egoist, ready to dogmatise and mis-educate when his turn comes.” Here is another: “If we would reform education, we must first reform Society; and if we would reform Society, we must first reform education.” Here is a third: “If we would educate the child in an atmosphere of freedom, we must know what are the central tendencies of his nature; and if we would know what are the central tendencies of his nature, we must educate him in an atmosphere of freedom.” The teacher might well be pardoned for regarding these and similar circles as impassable. But there is no circle, however seemingly impassable, which that blend of imagination, intelligence, and patience, which we call *genius*, cannot break through; and if genius, as such, cannot be cultivated, it is no paradox

to say that the qualities which combine to produce it can. The teacher will of course have much to unlearn and much to learn. Nor will it be easy for him to find appropriate help and guidance. There will be things for him to do, directions for which are given in no manual of pedagogy. Here are some of them : To efface himself as much as possible, to realise that not he, but the child, plays the leading part in the drama of school life. To put unbounded faith in the child's nature, in spite of its early weaknesses, crudities, and other shortcomings, feeling sure that its higher tendencies, if allowed to unfold themselves in due season, will gradually master and control the lower. To give the child as much freedom as is compatible with the maintenance of the reality rather than the semblance of order. To relieve him from the deadening pressure of the discipline of drill, and to help him to subject himself to the discipline of self-control. To provide outlets for all his healthy activities, taking care that

these shape their own channels, as far as may be possible, and are not merely directed into ready-made canals. To place at his disposal such materials as will provide him both with mental and spiritual food, and with opportunities for the exercise of his mental and spiritual faculties. To give him such guidance as his expanding nature may seem to need, taking care that the guidance given is the outcome of sympathetic study of his instinctive tendencies, and interferes as little as possible with his freedom of choice. To do nothing for him which he can reasonably be expected to do for himself. To abstain from that excessive fault-finding which the dogmatic spirit (always prone to mistake correctness for goodness) is apt to engender, and which paralyses the child's initiative, and makes him morbidly self-conscious and self-distrustful. To help him to think more of overcoming difficulties, and doing things well, than of producing plausible and possibly deceptive results. To foster his natural sin-

cerity, and keep far away from him whatever savours of make-believe, self-deception, and fraud. To study and take thought for his individuality, so that he may realise and outgrow himself, and at last transcend his individuality, in his own particular way—the way which Nature seems to have marked out as best for *him*. To help him to develop all his expansive instincts, so that his growth may be as many-sided and therefore as healthy and harmonious as possible. To realise, and help him to realise (should this be necessary), that healthy and harmonious growth is its own reward, and so relieve him from the false and demoralising stimulus of external rewards and punishments. To discourage competition between child and child, with the vanity and selfishness which this necessarily tends to breed. To foster the child's communal instinct, his spirit of comradeship, his latent capacity for sympathy and love.

I could easily make this list longer, but I

think I have made it long enough. Perhaps I have made it too long, for after all it is an *idea* that I am setting before the teacher, not a theory, still less a fully elaborated system. If the idea commends itself to him in any respect or degree, he must interpret it (both in theory and practice) in his own individual way. I should be false to my own first principles if I tried to do for him what, if it is to have any lasting value, he must do for himself.

He may perhaps tell me that I am setting before him an unattainable goal. I know that I am. If the ideal nature could evolve itself in the school life of the child it would be unworthy of the teacher's devotion. How long it may need for its final evolution—how many years or lives or cosmic eras—is no immediate concern of ours. The bastard self evolves itself in twenty or thirty or forty years, and then grows old and decrepit. If the real self is in a sense an unapproachable ideal, it will keep the soul that strives to



realise it everlastingly young. Education can but help the evolving life to make a happy start ; but a happy start, as Plato says, is the most important stage towards ultimate perfection.

We hear much nowadays about eugenics ; and a society has, I believe, been formed to improve the breed of men. If the members of that society propose to achieve their end by skilful *breeding*, I do not think they will go very far. But if they will try to achieve it by skilful *growing*, they will find that a boundless field of useful action lies before them. For though we may be good growers of wheat and barley, sheep and oxen, we are bad growers of men.

To improve the breed of men by skilful “growing,” would, I think, go a long way towards solving many weighty problems. Indeed, I sometimes think that all the master problems of life will have to be solved in the nursery and the schoolroom ; that if we wait for their solution till the child has grown to

manhood and hardened into what we call maturity, we shall have waited too long. At any rate, an initial solution will have to be given in the nursery and the schoolroom, which will make possible a later and fuller solution in the world of adult human life. When I throw out such suggestions as these, the horizon of the teacher's work begins to recede indefinitely ; and he may well wonder when and where his responsibilities (which are of course commensurate with his opportunities) will end. But I, for my part, will do nothing to make him undervalue his high calling ; for I know well that if the spirit of the pioneer is in him, he will be stimulated rather than daunted by the magnitude of his mighty task.



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